Relationship Building with Other Disciplines for Enhanced Counterintelligence Posture

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No Discipline Should be an Island

Security objectives can be more effectively achieved through the establishment of relationships with other departments in the organization. Each department of an organization has a specific mission; however, often times department managers do not realize their missions have shared goals with the Industrial Security department. The development of relationships among department managers increases awareness of shared mission objectives across enterprise entities and ultimately enhances Security efforts to protect the company. Security managers can bring value to other departments. A proactive approach to relationship development with non-Security counterparts is often the first step towards marketing the services and support the Security department can provide to others. Below are some relationship building ideas and techniques to enhance your CI programs, your overall security program, and your professional relationships in general.

Learn Lingo

There have been several instances when throughout a meeting participants ended up taking notes on the terms and acronyms being used, requiring follow up with a few of the participants from that meeting to better understand jargon and/or "lingo." This is a great opportunity to learn the various disciplines' language and be able to effectively, as well as efficiently, communicate with them. An example of this could be the Human Resources (HR) term of "disengaged employee," which could also mean an "accidental insider" for Industrial Security. Both terms have a unique connotation and each discipline may have varying responses to this type of employee. The idea is to understand what HR means, translate it to Industrial Security terms and have that meaningful conversation. Learning to speak each discipline's jargon goes a long way and is a great launching pad for that developing relationship.

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Share Ideas Formally and Informally
It can be extremely beneficial to routinely meet with other department members, both formally and informally. Often, when an employee relations issue surfaces, a teleconference or virtual meeting is called to include various stakeholders, bringing all parties to the table for awareness purposes moving forward. Consider sending an instant message to inquire whether or not HR, Facilities, or Legal Counsel is available to go for a walk and discuss the matter. A ten minute walk around the building is good to get the blood circulating and thoughts flowing between colleagues, and also serves as an opportunity to get out and about and log some time with a counterpart. The practice of Security by Walkabout may also reap benefits of identifying shortcomings around the facility of a door not securing properly or an employee not wearing his/her badge.

A more formal exchange of ideas could happen through reoccurring meetings with the various areas of operation; specifically, a weekly or monthly meeting wherein each discipline shares the latest and greatest about what changes are occurring in their world or what issue is requiring the most of their focus. The practice of security is often in flux, and the topics of an Insider Threat Program or planned compliance inspections should be known throughout an organization. As for any meeting, have an agenda prepared and be ready to discuss how the Security department can benefit the group as a whole. Be inquisitive and ask for honest feedback on how the other disciplines think the Security department brings value or impedes to their mission.   Other departments often view Security as a necessary evil at best. The recurring discussion could be an opportunity to erase the misperceptions about the Security department. Work to ensure the shared time is meaningful to others. This can be another "quick win" in developing relationships and promoting the idea of Security as a Strategic Business Partner.

Actionable Items and Follow Up
There is nothing more disheartening than when you attend a meeting and walk away with the feeling progress was made, but one week later at the next meeting a review finds progress stopped.   Provide meaningful, actionable post-meeting tasks that are well-reasoned and assigned to those who can follow through responsibly. Attach due dates and ensure transmission of minutes to attendees with the action items and due dates. Follow up to check on progress and offer to provide assist where possible. A meeting may be educational or for awareness puproses only, meaning there are no action items. It is important to remember meetings can be used as vehicles to inform and influence, not just for the purpose of assignment of tasks.

Promoting Employee Well-Being
Promoting employee well-being and sustaining a positive, pleasant workplace which attracts and retains talented people should be essential aspects of the function of Human Resources/Talent Acquisition gaining support from other stakeholders. These objectives are very closely tied to the Industrial Security and CI goals of preventing and recognizing employee behavior that is disruptive, or, even worse, behavior which is a potential precursor to actions threatening information protection practices, workplace safety, and physical security.

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This is an area where security professionals need to become more involved and one way to do so is to engage in dialog with Human Resources and management alike on the topics of Insider Threat Program and personnel security clearance adverse information reporting requirements. Make it a priority to have employee relations issues on the agenda for these meetings so information can be exchange and other areas of concern may be explored. Identifying and mitigating problems before manifestation is the primary objective across all departments.

Effective Communication
Being a patient and active listener is a colossal part of effective communication. The goal of a meaningful conversation is to ensure all parties are heard and understood, even if there is disagreement. Sometimes this means letting an employee vent frustration about the inconvenience of Security-based protocol, such as a random bag inspection.   When you do not agree with what is being said, take a few minutes to collect your thoughts, assess your audience and formulate how to broach the subject without the recipients "tuning out" your message. If you communicate mostly through emails and texts, break it up with in-person conversations or phone calls. Ideas are often better received or conveyed when there is a direct and personal exchange. Additionally, educating how a practice has roots in federal and company policy but benefits the entire site safety-wise has the ability to soften the blow of an inconvenience; the random bag inspection is cast in a different light when employees understand the protection aspect of keeping prohibited items out of the facility.

Conclusion
Demonstrating the common goals and objectives the Security department shares with other departments in the Company is an effective way to increase efficiency and enhance security for the company. Security professionals must often educate colleagues in other departments on what the Security department can do to enhance their colleagues' mission accomplishment. The first step to doing so is developing meaningful relationships with other department managers and personnel.